EPILOGUE[6].

SPOKEN BY A DANCER.

FIRST, my fear; then, my court'sy: last my speech. My fear is, your displeasure; my court'sy, my duty; and my speech, to beg your pardons. If you look for a good speech now, you undo me: for what I have to say, is of mine own making; and what, indeed, I should say, will, I doubt, prove mine own marring. But to the purpose, and so to the venture.—Be it known to you, (as it is very well,) I was lately here in the end of a displeasing play, to pray your patience for it, and to promise you a better. I did mean, indeed, to pay you with this; which, if, like an ill venture, it come unluckily home, I break, and you, my gentle creditors, lose. Here, I promised you, I would be, and here I commit my body to your mercies: bate me some, and I will pay you some, and, as most debtors do, promise you infinitely.

If my tongue cannot entreat you to acquit me, will you command me to use my legs? and yet that were but light payment,—to dance out of your debt. But a good conscience will make any possible satisfaction, and so will I. All the gentlewomen here have forgiven me[7]; if the gentlemen will not, then the gentlemen do not agree with the gentlewomen, which was never seen before in such an assembly.

One word more, I beseech you. If you be not

6 This epilogue was merely occasional, and alludes to some theatrical transaction. JOHNSON.

7 All the GENTLEWOMEN, &c.] The trick of influencing* one

part of the audience by the favour of the other, has been played already in the epilogue to As You Like It.